



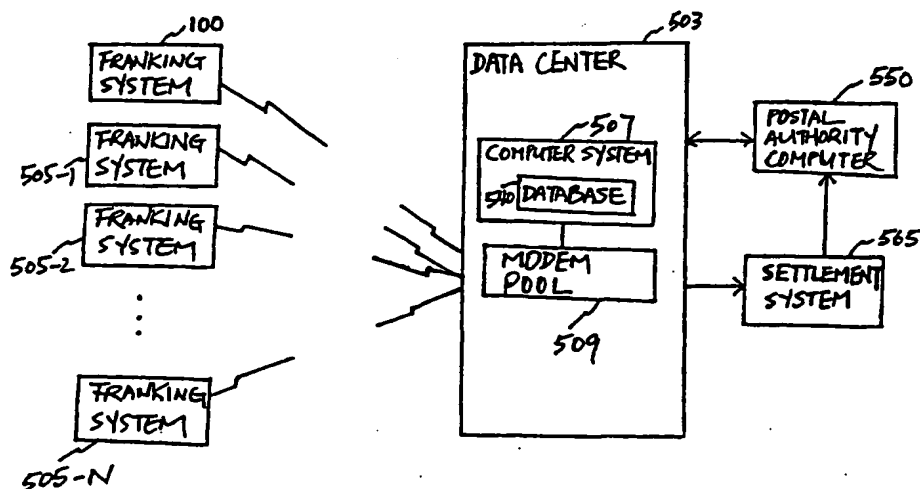
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(54) Title: **TECHNIQUE FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCE CONSUMPTION**

(57) Abstract

In an arrangement for accounting for consumption of a resource, e.g., utilization of a postal service or utilities, a data center (503, 803) periodically communicates with multiple franking systems (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n) dispensing postage for the postal service utilization. The data center (503, 803) receives transaction records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309), where a transaction record (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) is associated with each transaction performed by the franking system (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n) in each period. Each record (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) includes at least the postage dispensed (305) in the associated franking transaction, and an ascending register value (307) indicating the cumulative postage dispensed. Using the received records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309), the data center (503, 803) assesses the charges during the period and causes assessed charges to be charged to an account associated with the franking system (100, 505-1, 505-2, 505-n). In addition, the data center (503, 803) forwards a copy of the received records (301, 303, 305, 307, 309) to another system (550, 565, 850, 860) for storage, which may be used by the postal authority or utility to audit the charges.